Introduction

Personal Futures Planning is a tool for fostering new ways of thinking about people with disabilities. Futures planning helps groups of people focus on opportunities for people with disabilities to develop personal relationships, have positive roles in community life, increase their control of their own lives, and develop the skills and abilities to achieve these goals. Personal Futures Planning has evolved from the efforts of many people working to implement the ideals of community participation for people with disabilities. Futures planning draws directly from the work of John O’ Brien service issues, who have developed what they call “Life Style Planning”. They base it on a framework that describes five essential accomplishments that human services should seek:

1. community presence
2. community participation
3. choice
4. respect and
5. competence.

What is Personal Futures (PFP) Planning?

A Personal Futures Plan for a person is that person’s vision of what he or she would like to be and do. When expressed and recorded, the hopes and dreams of that person become an active plan for making changes in the future. The plan is not static, but rather it changes as new opportunities and obstacles arise.

Futures planning is more than just a plan; it is an ongoing problem solving process. It comes about through a small group of people who agree to meet for mutual support, brainstorming and strategizing. This circle of support or person-centred team makes commitments and takes action to ensure that changes will be accomplished for the focus person.

- Personal Futures Planning can complement the Individual Habilitation Planning (IHP) process.
- A futures plan can help those involved with the focus person see the total person, recognize his or her desires and interest and discover completely new ways of thinking about the future of the person.
- A futures plan can help workers organize their work, and it can establish accountability among agencies for the implementation of certain strategies.
- Together, the futures plan and the habilitation plan provide a more comprehensive and feasible approach to achieving the desired goals of the person.
**Why PFP?**

There are at least three major problems with the traditional approach to planning:

1. It begins with an assessment process that often highlights the person’s deficits. When the person is defined in terms of deficits, the person is in constant need of services and “fixing”. In this situation, the person is never ready for community life.

2. It tends to establish goals that are already part of existing programs. The plan is designed to fit the person into a particular program, even if that program is not exactly what that person needs.

3. It relies solely on professional judgment and decision-making. People with disabilities are prevented from taking initiative or directing action to affect their own lives.

PFP provide strategies to increase the likelihood that people with disabilities will develop relationships, be part of community life, increase their control over their lives, acquire increasingly positive roles in community life and develop competencies to help them accomplish these goals. Futures planning helps to clarify and implement these ideals, one person at a time.

PFP focuses on the person’s gifts, talents and skills, deficits and deficiencies that a person may have. This approach focuses on the positive attributes of an individual, rather than limitations or the problems. This is very different from traditional models for planning programs and services for people with disabilities.

A basic value in this approach is being “person centered.” The focus is continually on the individual for whom the futures plan is being developed. This also is different from traditional planning methods, which have tended to focus on services and to plug a person into a slot in a program. A future planning does not look at what services are available in the community but rather considers things that need to happen so that a Personal Futures Planning depends upon the support and participation of a few individuals who are very close to and care about the person with disabilities. These individuals take steps to assure that things happen for the person. They help make connections in the community to assist the person in becoming a full participant in that community. This leads to a more satisfying life for the person for whom the plan has been developed.

Personal Futures Planning is an interactive style of planning based on the assumption that there are no simple answers to complex problems. Interactive planning is a process of asking questions and learning as a group to produce actions or directions to try. This model emphasizes the process of planning rather than the product. It is a continuous problem-solving process compared to more traditional planning, such as the IHP, which may occur once a year.

Interactive planning has several distinctive characteristics:

1. It builds descriptions of capacities and opportunities in people and environments. It helps people discover the capacities that already exist within a situation.

2. It seeks ideals. People planning together are motivated by a collective vision that enables them to clarify values and find direction in complex situation.
3. It brings together the people who live with the problem daily, and who are committed to learning together to be more effective in dealing with the situation. Through the group, participants learn to collaborate, reflect, clarify values, act and evaluate to find new directions.

4. It helps people invent and experiment with new courses of action. As people take action, they discover strategies that address the situations they face.

5. It inspires initiative. Interactive planning groups are guided by a vision of a more desirable future, dependent on the commitments of people to take action, and renewed by people’s capacity to learn together. The groups are regenerated by their capacity to address problems, to reflect, to act and to learn.

Personal Futures Planning identifies capacities and values, fosters collaborative learning and action, and encourages initiative and creativity.

There are three steps in the Personal Futures Planning process.
- The first is the creation of a personal profile representing comprehensive information about the individual. This is developed through a group interview.
- The second step is the development of a plan for the person based on the information gathered from the group.
- The final step is the commitment by a group of individuals to form a network of support to help the person carry out the plan.

Components of An Effective PFP Process
The group includes at least one family member, a community member, a staff member, an advocate and the person who is the focus of the planning champion of the dream. This person makes extraordinary efforts to bring the dream into reality.

Process of Mapping
- Set common time for every one - parents, teacher, sibling, friends, neighbours and others involved in the process.
- At school, home, hall, canteen... any place
- Large number of chart papers and coloured pens
- Two lead persons - one facilitator and a recorder

Dream Map
Parents of children with disabilities, lack their ability to dream opportunity, to think what they want most for their child. This enables parents to forget reality for a while and dream.

A dream map provides opportunity to bring out what parents hold in their heart and mind for their child’s future.
Maps

1. Relationship
   Who is in the life of the focus person?

2. Places
   Describes community presence, where someone lives, works, visits, and so on.

3. Background
   What has happened to the focus person up to now?

What is the Life Pattern?

4. Preferences
   Lists the individual's potentials and interests. Also lists things not enjoyed or appreciated.

5. Dreams
   Personal dreams and desires for the future.

6. Hopes & Fears
   Things which look hopeful in reaching the dream. Fears which stand in the way.

PFP Brings

- sense of belonging
- relationship building
- team approach
- inclusion of child in a planning process
- student/child as a key element in MAPS – process
- Inclusion of family
- planning concrete steps in planning
- professionals to think broadly

Do's

- Write exactly what people say
- Create an informal atmosphere
- Leave with an action plan
- Be a sensitive guide
- Value everyone's contribution
- Be positive
- Make this an ongoing process

Don'ts

- Interrupt participation
- Make leading commands
- Make judgement of what people say
- Criticize people's comments
- Hurry the process
- Forget to follow on each comment
- View the process as a one time event

Following pages have sample PFPs.
Name: Sonu Shyamal Bhondel
Age: 5 years
DOB: 15/05/2001

Developmental Stages:
- He learnt to sit - 1½ years
- He learnt to walk - 3 years
- He learnt to chew - 3 years

Father
Mother
Grandfather
Grandmother
Uncle

F.T.N.D

Forces Delivery.

After had given injection he cried.
When he was born he turned blue.

He had Shunt Surgery - 8 months.

He had Brain Haemorrhage - 1 month 15 days.

Occured Visually Impairment.

He had fever - 1½ year admitted in hospital.
Relationship Map

ophthalmologist
Speech therapist
Special Educator
Physiotherapist

Mother
Father
Grandfather
Grandmother
Uncle
Creating Learning Opportunities
Preference Map.

Strength

- He can see from the left peripheral up to one foot
- He can use left hand most rather than right
- He can vocalize for communication
- He can hear
- He can walk independently
- He can chew solid food also snacks like kurkure (crispy snacks)
- He can interact with unfamiliar person but if he does not like he goes away

Limitation

- He can only see from the left peripheral
- He needs physical assistance while using right hand
- He needs physical assistance for doing all daily life care skills
- He does not like to sit on one place
- He can not chew too hard items like chikki
- When he is listening music if suddenly music will stop he starts cry.
Creating Learning Opportunities

**Communication Map:**

Communicates when he feels:
- hungry
- thirsty
- happy
- angry
- feels uneasy
and wants something like toy, mother.

He communicates through:
- making different sounds
- vocalization "Aa... Ee..."
- pulling
- pushing
- smiling
- crying
- buying
- banging things on floor or table

He communicates at:
- School
- Home
- Unfamiliar places

He communicates with:
- mother
- grandfather
- teachers.